



IMPACT REPORT



2024

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Message from the Director

This year has been an incredible journey for the Autism Society Inland Empire, thanks to you—the families, supporters, and partners who drive our mission of supporting and empowering individuals with Autism and their families.

As the demand for services continues to grow in our community, our Autism Society Inland Empire team has focused on enhancing our programs and expanding our reach. We aim to ensure everyone can access the services they need while feeling safe, respected, and valued. Our commitment to providing quality support, knowledge, and safe spaces fosters well-being and motivates us to implement innovative solutions and create meaningful connections.

In 2025, we will celebrate 38 years of transformative impact. Our strategic initiatives have improved local and state services and created a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with Autism. We are proud of our progress and remain dedicated to building a brighter future for all.

The achievements highlighted in this report testify to what's possible when we come together for our Autism community. Thank you for being an essential part of this journey. Your unwavering support and generosity continue to make a difference in the lives of many. Together, we are changing how individuals with Autism thrive throughout their lives.

With heartfelt appreciation,



Beth Burt
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beth Burt".

What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), commonly known as Autism, is a lifelong developmental condition that is usually evident in early childhood. It often affects individuals' social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. Autism is a spectrum condition, meaning it impacts people in diverse ways and to varying extents. Consequently, individuals with Autism may have different support needs depending on their symptoms and their unique experiences.



The need in our local Autism community

With Autism now affecting 1 in 22 children in California, over 30,000 individuals with Autism and 90,000 family members live in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The Autism Society Inland Empire provides crucial services to meet these individuals' and their family's unique needs.

89%
unemployment rate
for Inland Regional
Center clients as of
2023.

DDS Employment Dashboard

4x
Autistic people are
up to four times
more likely to
experience
loneliness than non-
autistic people.

46% Less than half of the families
participating in our 2024 survey felt
connected and supported by their city
and community.

7x
individuals with
Autism are seven
times more likely to
interact with law
enforcement.

Lartey, 2024

6,000+
teens and adults in
Inland Regional
Center have
challenging behaviors
and few resources.





A mother recently shared:

"I really appreciate the support. I felt so alone when my son was first diagnosed and I didn't know how to help him. But your organization provided the support I needed to help him and myself!"

Our Mission

We create connections, empowering everyone in our local Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

While we focus primarily on families of Autism, we serve all people with developmental disabilities. In 2024, our team served a new record of more than 33,300 people through the following programs:

- Recreation Programs provide social & recreation programs that offer a safe place of belonging and acceptance
- Education provides essential support and resources to individuals with Autism and their families. This includes access to the latest research, strategies, and practical solutions to help them thrive.
- Systems Navigation Services help families and individuals with Autism navigate complex systems such as healthcare, education, and social services.
- Support a safe space for individuals with Autism and their families to share their experiences, challenges, and successes.
- Grassroots Advocacy aims to educate legislators and policymakers on the needs and solutions for our community.
- Initiatives that focus on the most pressing challenges faced by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families

Our logo symbolizes community, strength, equality, diversity, pathways, and, of course, connection.

- The single threads represent individuality and unique experiences interconnected and woven into the greater community.
- The weave pattern symbolizes individuals and groups coming together, working together.
- The intersections are their respective skills, goals, and talents.
- Two horizontal threads have the same color, which represents equality.

CONNECT WITH US

www.IEAutism.org
info@IEAutism.org



IEAutism.org

Fiscal Year 2024

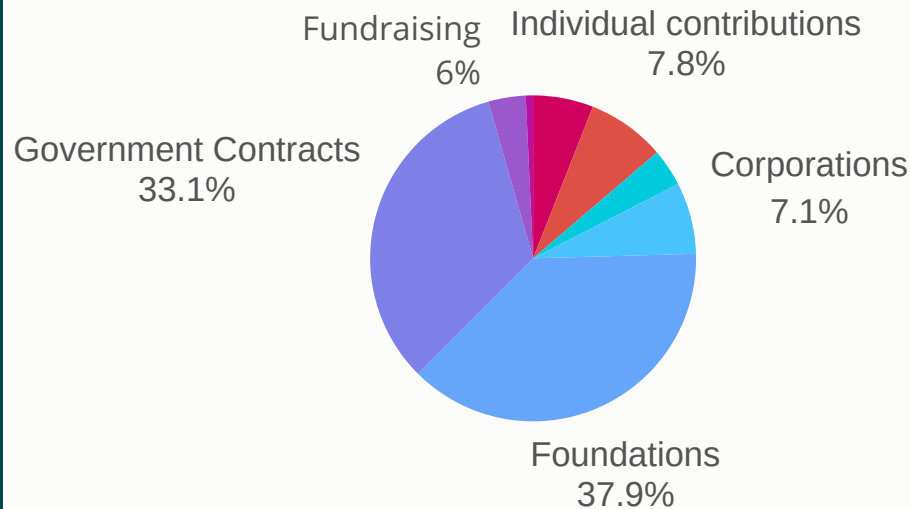
The Autism Society Inland Empire is a 100% self-funded non-profit organization. We rely on grants, sponsors, and donations yearly to support our vital work. We take great pride in being good stewards of the finances entrusted to us, ensuring that every dollar raised stays within our community to benefit local Autism families. Your support directly impacts the lives of those we serve, making a meaningful difference right here at home.

483
people volunteered over
3,800 hours

+ 6%
Increase in revenue
in 2024 from 2023.

87%
Of expenses went to
programs.

Revenue: \$1.2M



Expenses: \$1.1M



Thank you to our partners!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors and grantors for their unwavering support of the Autism Society Inland Empire and the local Autism and IDD community. Each organization brings a unique focus to addressing the needs of individuals with Autism and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Whether through safety, employment services, educational programs, or community engagement, their contributions are invaluable.

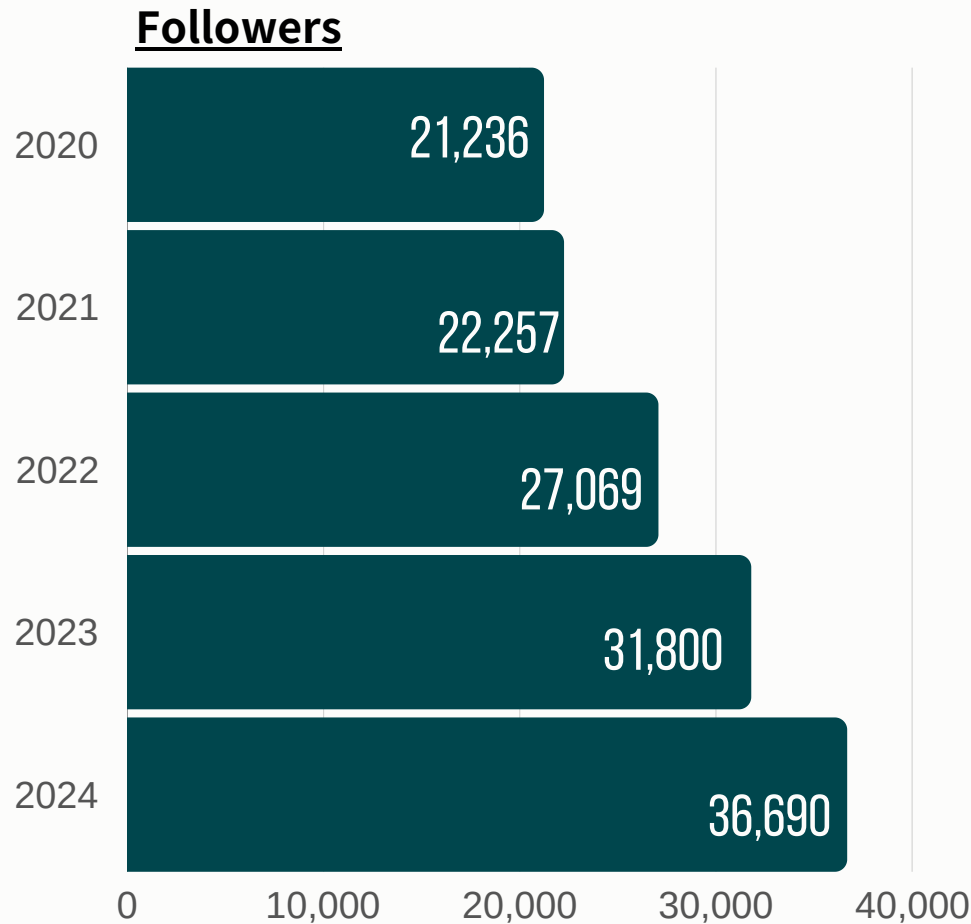
By working together, these organizations enhance the quality of life for individuals and families within our community by facilitating access to essential services, influencing policy and social recreation programs, and creating opportunities to live fuller lives.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership in making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.



Our reach

Social Media Community



Includes Facebook page, Facebook group, Linked In, X, Instagram and email list

Trusted Messenger

Since 1986, we at the Autism Society Inland Empire have proudly served as our community's trusted messenger and thought leader.

Our unwavering commitment to advocacy, education, and support for individuals with Autism and their families has earned us this standing. We have built strong relationships with key organizations, including the SBC Sheriff's Department, IRC, DDS, and many others, further strengthening our impact.

Our dedication to inclusivity and personalized support has fostered deep trust and strong bonds within the community. By proactively addressing the unique needs of the Autism community through tailored advocacy and localized support, we have solidified our standing as a reliable and compassionate organization.



Our Efforts in 2024




OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Systems Navigation Services

2024: Served 5,854 individuals

The Autism Society Inland Empire offers a Systems Navigation program to help families and individuals with Autism navigate the many services and resources that become part of our lives: special education services, Regional Center support, navigating healthcare, In-Home Supportive Services, social security, and community resources to name a few.

Our Resource Specialists provide individual support to help families prioritize and learn how to navigate these systems, ensuring that individuals with Autism and their families receive the support needed to thrive.



“Autism Society has been a gem for my son! The social gatherings has allowed my family to connect with family alike. The information and resources provided by specialist has also been very useful.”

OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Systems Navigation Services

In 2024, the Autism Society Inland Empire received a three-year funding award through a collaboration with Children's Network and First 5 San Bernardino. This investment has enabled the organization to allocate more resources to support families with children under six years old in San Bernardino County.

Key Improvements include:

- **Enhanced Support for Young Families.** The funding has allowed the Autism Society to host more events tailored to young families, increase outreach efforts, and create educational materials for early intervention. These initiatives ensure that families receive the necessary support during critical developmental years.
- **Expansion of Staff and Services.** With additional staff, the organization can provide personalized attention and timely responses, enhancing the overall quality of support for families.
- **Improved Communication Systems.** The introduction of a new phone and tracking system in 2024 has reduced telephone tag, leading to more efficient communication and quicker response times, which improves service delivery.



OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Recreation Programs

2024: Served 11,783 individuals

The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, has been vocal about the growing epidemic of loneliness and its severe impact on public health. He has described loneliness as an "epidemic" that poses significant risks to both individual and societal well-being, comparing its health impacts to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Autistic people are up to four times more likely to experience loneliness than non-autistic people. Research shows that loneliness is linked to adverse mental and physical health outcomes, including increased anxiety, depression, and even higher mortality rates. Moreover, the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding Autism can exacerbate feelings of isolation for both autistic individuals and their families.

Our recreational programs provide meaningful connection opportunities that combat isolation and enhance well-being. Our events create a supportive environment where children and adults with Autism and their family members can forge friendships, find emotional outlets, and experience belonging.



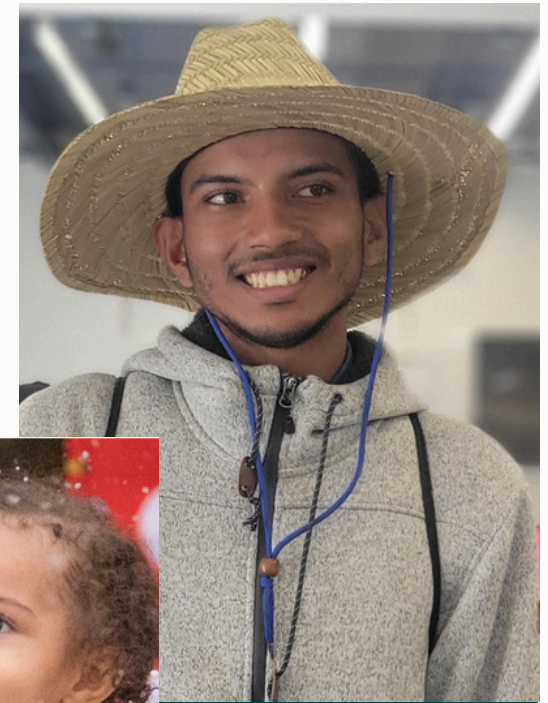
“Autism Society events have given my son more opportunity to be himself & confident in his own skin & has helped him more in public as well as myself it's brought comfort to me that we are not alone we really enjoy them it makes us feel at home❤️”

OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Recreation Programs

2024 was another record year in attendance. Autism Society Inland Empire hosted over 200 virtual and in-person events.

From Holiday events, bowling, movies, swimming, Jump Nights, Art classes, Meet-ups for teens and adults, and more!



OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Education and Outreach

2024: Education - served 2,233 individuals
 Outreach - served 8,467 individuals

The Autism Society Inland Empire offers educational events, including webinars, in-person conferences, and workshops. These events feature expert speakers, interactive sessions, and the latest research and strategies in Autism care and education. They always have a Spanish interpreter available. They are designed to help individuals with Autism and their family members expand their knowledge, connect with the community, and find practical solutions. In 2024, we held 27 educational events in which 2,233 people participated. Topics included special education, navigating systems, and more.

Outreach is vital for the Autism Society Inland Empire as it raises awareness, connects families, and provides access to essential resources. We attended 24 events, in which almost 8,500 people participated.







FREE Downloadable Toolkits available in English & Spanish

We provided free Workshops in rural communities.

OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Support

2024: Formal Support Groups served 476 individuals
Closed Facebook Group served 6,664 individuals

The Autism Society Inland Empire realizes that support groups can be an essential resource for adults with Autism and family members. These groups provide Emotional Support, a place to share information and practical advice and foster friendships and a strong support network.

We currently provide three formal groups:

- **Autistics Diagnosed as Adults-** A virtual monthly group run by a neurodivergent therapist.
- **Olive Tree Coffee Talk in Coachella Valley-** We co-sponsor this in-person monthly support group for parents with children of all ages and types of developmental disabilities.
- **Talk to Me Tuesday** is a twice-a-month virtual support group for teens and adults with Autism, their family members, and professionals. A neurodivergent facilitator runs this group.
- There is a Private Facebook Group where individuals can ask questions and share with others. This group includes people with Autism, family members, and professionals.

OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Grassroots Advocacy

Grassroots advocacy is vital to the Autism Society because it empowers individuals with Autism and their families by giving them a voice in decision-making processes. It raises awareness, reduces stigma, and fosters community support. By influencing policies and creating sustainable change, grassroots efforts ensure that the needs of the autism community are met effectively and inclusively.

The Autism Society Inland Empire engages with our communities, raises awareness, and encourages others to contact their local, state, or federal policymakers to advocate. This empowers people to advocate directly for their communities' needs and priorities. Additionally, we sit on several local and state task forces to ensure that the voices of individuals with Autism and their families are heard in policy discussions and decision-making processes. This involvement helps shape policies and programs that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the Autism community.



State Task Forces Autism Society Inland Empire Participates In:

- **DDS Latino Focus Group**
- **DDS Master Plan**
- **DDS Quality Incentives Program (QIP) Workgroup**
- **DDS Task Force Employment**
- **DDS Regional Center Performance Measures**
- **DLAC Housing sub-committee**
- **SB882 Advisory Council on Improving Interactions between People with Intellectual and Development Disabilities, Mental Health and Law Enforcement**

OUR EFFORTS IN 2024

Grassroots Advocacy

In 2024, the Autism Society Inland Empire worked on various legislative issues including:



Legislative Positions:

1. DRC Amicus Letter to the California Supreme Court: No Position.
2. AB 1147 - Disability Equity, Transparency, and Accountability Act of 2024: No Position. This bill aims to enhance transparency and accountability within regional centers.
3. AB 1876: Support. This bill extends the right to use remote technologies for Individual Program Planning (IPP) and Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings.
4. AB 1977: Support. This bill seeks to eliminate the redundant rediagnosis requirement for children every two years by commercial health plans.
5. AB 2002 (Sanchez): Strong Opposition. This bill proposes a statewide blue envelope system at DMV offices.
6. AB 2246: Support. This bill focuses on the qualification of autism service paraprofessionals.
7. AB 2449 (Tri Ta): Strong Support. This legislation aims to broaden healthcare coverage for autism services, incorporating QABA-certified professionals alongside BACB-certified ones.
8. SB 483 (Senator Dave Cortese): Strong Support. This bill seeks to protect vulnerable students' safety and rights by banning prone restraint, known as Max Benson's Law.
9. TBL: Support. This proposal rejects the move of the Employment First Office to the newly named Disability Works CA, keeping it under CA HHS.
10. Disability License Identifier Bill: Strong Opposition. This bill proposes a voluntary disability identifier on state-issued identification cards and licenses within the DMV database.



Key Initiatives 2024



Our Initiatives: Ending Disparities for People of Color

Across multiple systems, people of color and non-English-speaking families face different barriers to obtaining and accessing services.

The promotion of fairness necessitates the distribution of decision-making authority to those most impacted by inequalities.

Individuals from diverse backgrounds bring a wealth of knowledge and understanding rooted in their experiences and their communities' challenges. Their involvement goes beyond just providing input; it's about acknowledging them as equal partners in identifying core issues and collaboratively crafting solutions from the ground up.

These initiatives are centered around creating platforms and opportunities for these individuals to be integral to the solution. It's about changing the narrative, shifting the balance of power, and embodying equity and inclusion principles.

CLASE Community of Practice

The Autism Society Inland Empire developed and facilitated the Colaboración, Liderazgo, Abogacía, and Servicio y Educación (CLASE) Community of Practice. Funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), CLASE is a Community of Practice for leaders of groups and non-profit organizations that serve Hispanic and Spanish-speaking individuals and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) here in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

Early Start Services

Funded by the California Department of Development Services, this two-year grant focuses on increasing awareness and access to Early Start services for Spanish-speaking, foster, and Native American Communities. This project focuses on outreach campaigns designed with stakeholder input and ideas from marginalized communities to increase Early Start services and Early Intervention. Additionally, this project increases the knowledge of medical professionals, preschool/childcare facilities, and families/caregivers for appropriate diagnoses, treatment, and resources.

First Nations Outreach

In 2024, the Inland Regional Center awarded \$150,000 to the Autism Society Inland Empire to strengthen relationships with First Nation communities in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. This initiative focuses on outreach, case management, and trauma-sensitive early intervention services, addressing each tribe's unique needs and traditions.

Our Initiatives: Employment

With an 89% unemployment rate for the 19,000 Inland Regional Center clients, the Autism Society Inland Empire is committed to improving employment outcomes for individuals with Autism and other developmental disabilities.

We offer paid and unpaid opportunities for adults with Autism and developmental disabilities to explore different types of employment. These include:

- A newly vendorized Remote Employment Program through Regional Centers. We have partnered with Daivergent to offer 130 hours of training, job exploration, job matching, and support. This program has an 83% success rate in helping individuals become employed, attend college or vocational programs, or find internships.
- Paid speaking opportunities through our speaker's bureau and focus groups.
- Volunteer opportunities at our largest events.
- Our Marketplace provides free space at our Walks and Holiday parties for those interested in self-employment and entrepreneurship.



Our Initiatives: Safety

Since 2020, the Autism Society Inland Empire has developed comprehensive training programs for law enforcement, fire, and emergency personnel, offering four- and two-hour courses. These trainings, delivered by experienced law enforcement officers, include valuable Q&A sessions with a panel of adults with developmental disabilities.

- Individuals with Autism are seven times more likely to have encounters with law enforcement compared to those without Autism.
- Nearly half (49%) of children with Autism attempt to wander or elope from a safe environment, which is almost four times higher than their unaffected siblings.
- Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for individuals with Autism. Children with Autism are 160 times more likely to die from drowning compared to the general pediatric population.



(L to R) Ermes Maqueira, Corporal Ontario Police Department ; Ontario Police Chief, Mike Lorenz; Beth Burt, Autism Society Inland Empire; Ontario Fire Chief Mike Gerken; Darlene Sanchez, Assistant City Manager

Notable Moments

- Presented two and 4-hour First Responder training for over 720 professionals since 2021 (50 in 2024).
- Distributed over 1,100 Sensory Kits to First Responders and hospitals (379 in 2024).
- 509 people attended Safety Fairs for families in Buena Park, Perris, and Rancho Cucamonga
- Collaboration on the Blue Envelope Community Safety Program in San Bernardino County, Ontario, Fontana, and Chino.

Training Saves Lives

A School Resource Officer shared a memorable experience. The local high school called to report that a girl with Autism had eloped, and they could not locate her. At the time, he was unaware that she was carrying a knife and had threatened someone with it. After searching the school, he found her—knife in hand. He faced three options at that moment: use lethal force, employ pepper spray, or go hands-on to disarm her. All these options would have been legally justified, as she was brandishing a deadly weapon.

In that critical moment, he remembered the training from the Autism Society Inland Empire, which emphasized de-escalation. He successfully managed to take the knife from her without causing any harm. Later, he reported that as he went home at the end of his shift, he felt at peace, knowing he had chosen a path that avoided hurting the young girl.

New Training for 2025

- Training for hospitals and urgent cares
- Resources for families interacting with hospital/Urgent Care
- Updated training for Fire/EMS
- Training for individuals and families regarding fire safety
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) with IDD component to Safety training



Our Initiatives: Transforming Crisis Reponse

After the tragic shooting of Ryan Gainer, a 15-year-old boy with Autism in Apple Valley, the Autism Society Inland Empire formed a multidisciplinary "Tiger Team" to address systemic gaps in services and crisis response for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The Plan provides a framework for improving safety net systems, expanding access to resources, and enhancing crisis intervention strategies for individuals with Autism and their families. It is guided by best practices, evidence-based strategies, and input from stakeholders, including healthcare providers, law enforcement, educators, families, and individuals with Autism. The Plan aims to support over 6,000 teens and adults who are Inland Regional Center clients with "significant" behaviors.

2025 Agenda for Action:

The 2025 Agenda for Action prioritizes innovative strategies to ensure effective response and support for those in need. This agenda builds upon our comprehensive plan of four overarching goals and 17 objectives.

In 2025, we will prioritize innovative strategies to transform crisis response in our community. Here are our key initiatives for 2025:

1. **Expanded Response Beyond Law Enforcement:** We're shifting focus from traditional law enforcement to providing resources to a community with little or no resources.
 - a. **Pilot a Complex Medical Care Clinic:** A dedicated clinic will address complex medical needs, and healthcare professionals will receive specialized training.
 - b. **Alternatives to 911:** Inland Regional Center will implement a mobile response team in Riverside County and a START team in San Bernardino County, providing immediate, informed assistance.
2. **Continuous Community Training:** Ongoing education for emergency responders, schools, parks, faith-based institutions, and families will enhance understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and related challenges.
 - a. **Caregiver Crisis Training:** Develop training to provide resources and training for families with complex needs, equipping them to handle crises and interact with law enforcement.
 - b. **Resource Assessment:** A comprehensive survey will define crises and map local existing resources to ensure effective support.



Thank you to everyone in our Autism community for your dedication and support; your commitment makes a significant difference in the lives of individuals with Autism and their families.